

Utah people, etc.



SALINA

Continued from B1

to carry his burden.

"I was a soldier, and I learned that especially in a war situation, one winds up at a point where 'hosanna' and 'crucify him' are no longer two terms, but become one. Right and wrong are not that clear."

Why Pvt. Clarence V. Bertucci climbed to the guard tower and opened fire that night remains unclear. A medical team investigating the incident declared him insane and he was sent to an asylum in New York. He died in 1969.

Livestock pens and a small rodeo arena crowd against the hillside east of the town. The ground is hard and barren. There are no tents, there are no guard towers, no fence. To the uninitiated, it is a typical rural Western scene.

For Barkhoff and Altkruger it is different; a mental trip through time. The camp quickly unfolds before their eyes, they see the guard towers, the rows of tents and the wooden kitchen and mess hall. While tour group members struggle with maps for bearings, Altkruger and Barkhoff survey the site with knowing glances. To the northwest they see the guard tower, the source of the deadly fire. Altkruger stands with hands clasped behind his back, the ever-present cane a reminder of the shooting. He is content to survey the site from the crest of a small incline.

Barkhoff moves between small clusters of tour group members and townspeople who have also gathered at the site. He points to the maps and then gestures excitedly. After a few minutes he walks away from the group. A handful of people follow. He picks up a chunk of broken concrete and surveys the land. He moves cautiously and places the rock on the ground. He looks around and then retrieves the rock and moves slightly to the east. He bends and places the rock carefully then straightens again. Through an interpreter, the small group learns that the rock marks the spot where he and Altkruger shared a tent with other prisoners.

Later, the former prisoners visit area cemeteries to place flowers on the graves of the nurse and doctor who first treated their wounds and on the grave of the man who was responsible for overseeing their work assignments with area farmers. A trip is also to be taken to the hospital, their last memory of Salina before they were shipped north to an Army hospital in Brigham City.

But Wednesday's healing was far removed from the hospital. Instead, it was found in the dirt and dust of the former camp site and the cemeteries. Those who were there in 1945 gathered with the visitors, reminisced, shook hands and hugged. Old memories of broken and bloodied bodies were replaced with new pictures, pictures of friends gathered to bury the tragedy of the past.

"After 43 years, allow us to thank all of those who stood by us, took care of our wounds and pain — thank you from the bottom of our hearts," Barkhoff said. "Let us now join together and fight for peace. May the symbols of Utah along with the Stars and Stripes stand together over the land of the free."

County

Thursday, November



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